

Support of the North

4 1 A B Y - S e l e n

“Oh Gods! Please help! It hurts! It hurts so bad!”

Siv’s face scrunched into a look of concern and sympathy as she ripped the cap of a syringe off with her teeth. With a quick movement she buried the needle of the syringe into the leg of the DDF soldier squirming below her, through clothing and all. The man, a Selenian, had been dared by another DDF soldier to do an “ice water challenge”.

Of all the dangers of the frozen tundra, of course it would be the soldier’s own idiocrasy that would put them in the most danger.

The other soldier in question was sitting in the corner of the medical tent, eyes wide, guilt written on his face. It was evident on the Twilek’s face that if he could take the pain of his companion, he would in a heartbeat.

Of course they had thought that the challenge was harmless, a joke, a test of mettle. No one would get hurt, surely. The “ice water challenge” consisted of soldiers seeing who could stay submerged in the icy waters of Tunca the longest. When she had heard this, Sivall wanted to throttle every single DDF member in front of her.

“I know,” she mumbled softly, tossing the needle into a nearby sharps container before pulling another prefilled needle out of a nearby drawer, “I know it hurts. Shhhhh. Shhhhh. Deep breaths. You’ve got to take deep breaths, or you’ll pass out and we’ll have a bigger problem on our hands.” Another syringe went in before Sivall gestured for the guilt-ridden soldier to come over to her.

“Hold him down, this won’t be pleasant.”

“I-”

“Shut. Up. And. Hold. Him. Down.” The severity in her tone must have hit home, because the soldier stopped protesting and pressed his arms and hands against his fellow comrade’s shoulders and chest. Sivall took a deep breath, grabbed nearby scissors, and began cutting cloth and leather from the Selenian—shirt, pants, boots, socks... it would all have to go.

Each cut of the scissors crunched.

The clothing and boots had already solidified with a solid layer of ice. The blue woman grimaced hard as clothing fell away to expose the damage done. The legs of the soldier were red and inflamed, but it was the feet where the injuries reached a dangerous severity. Already, the Selenian’s pale skin was turning pale grey—with the toes taking on a deeper and almost black hue.

The warmth of the tent hit frozen flesh and the Selenian *screamed*.

It was a gods-awful sound. The sound of crystals in the flesh melting, of nerves screaming, of coagulated blood trying its hardest to pump, of ruptured cells and tissues. Sivall's heartstrings pulled, and a lump formed in her throat. Even with the force it was very possible that this man would lose his feet. The Selenian thrashed and his Twilek comrade struggled to keep him pinned to the table as he flailed like he was fighting for his life.

In the struggle the Twilek looked down at the Selenian's feet and all the color drained from his face, his tan complexion being replaced with a sickly green color.

"H-his feet... Oh *frack*."

"He'll be lucky if he keeps any of it," she replied as she gestured for the soldier to hold the Selenian down harder. The Twilek male instantly obeyed, mumbling apologies under his breath as his companion screamed bloody murder under him.

Then suddenly he stopped. Stopped screaming. Stopped moving.

The Twilek began to panic as Sivall quickly checked the Selenian over. Breathing, pulse, color—it was only when she confirmed that the injured soldier had passed out that she relaxed. Unconscious, but alive. Likely the pain had become too much. Hopefully by the time the DDF soldier awoke, the pain medicine would be in effect.

"He's fine." She looked up at the Twilek with a reassuring smile, and the man also seemed to relax. "He's just resting. We should let him." With that reassurance, the Twilek took a seat nearby to watch Siv work.

Sivall's hands quickly drew up another syringe full of medicine, then injected it—a medicine to break up the millions of micro-clots. Sivall then moved to another drawer and grabbed a white packet. With a quick movement she broke something inside of the packet which caused it to start heating up. She grabbed and activated several more before packing them around the Selenian's legs. Once the packs were in place, she wrapped the legs and packs in a sheet to keep the heat in.

"We didn't think he'd get hurt like this..."

The Chiss medic looked to the Twilek DDF soldier, blinking a few times.

"It... He was supposed to stop when it hurt. Everyone else did. But he just stayed in the water."

"He probably wanted to prove himself," Siv took a seat next to the Twilek, her eyes returning to the Selenian. "Prove that he was strong. Prove that he could handle it."

"We took the training, ye? The cold-weather training. We all did, our unit. He was supposed to *get out of the water when it started hurting*."

"Sometimes..." Siv paused, looking at the DDF soldier beside her, "Sometimes when we feel like we have something to prove, we don't always listen to reason. We continue, even when it hurts us—or sometimes even when it hurts others."

There was silence then, other than the sound of the Selenian breathing heavily and the wind howling outside the tent. The expression on the Twilek's face was a complicated one; anger, worry, guilt, confusion. Sivall could feel it through the force, too. The Twilek was blaming himself. Maybe if he had pulled him out of the water, maybe if he had made him listen, maybe, maybe, maybe....

Siv reached out and laid her hand on top of the Twilek's, which was gripping the pants of his uniform so tight his knuckles were white with the effort. The man looked up at her, the guilt more evident in his eyes. She couldn't tell him it wasn't all his fault, the entire group doing the challenge was complicit in this. Empty platitudes would not make him feel better.

"Talk to your comrades, let them know how this can be dangerous. If you want to do this kind of thing, please wait in till we're back home."

"Yeah..."

Sivall let out a soft sigh, then let go of the Twilek's hand and looked back at her patient. His breathing had become less labored, meaning likely the medication had finally kicked in. She would have to wait in till his feet dethawed to make a determination about how best to handle the situation. To determine whether she would try to heal him through the force or amputate his feet before they became infected. Gangrene would set in quickly, even with the antibiotics she gave him.

She stood and grabbed her datapad off a nearby counter, then typed in a message to the other medical staff. She would need more trained help once the Selenian awoke.